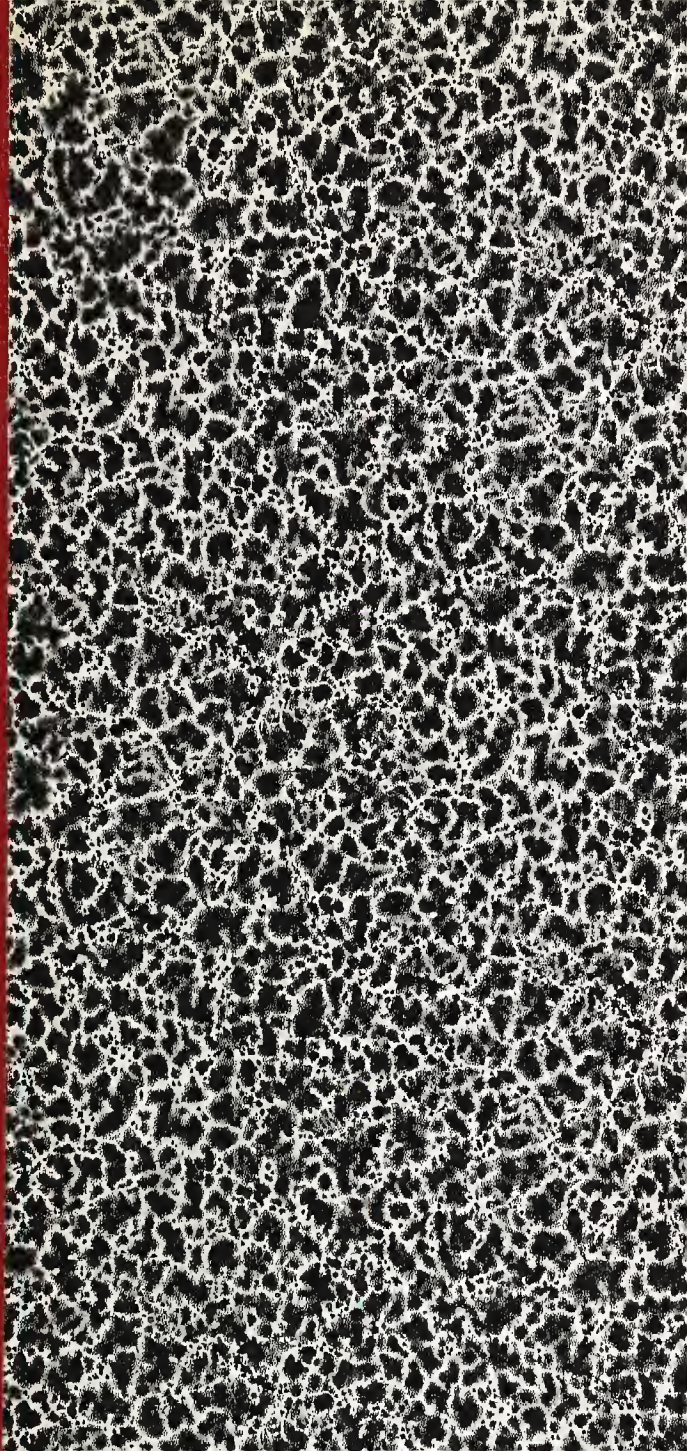


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SERMON,

PREACHED IN DUNSTABLE, N. H.

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. EBENEZER P. SPERRY,

AS

COLLEAGUE PASTOR

OF

THE CHURCH IN THAT PLACE

WITH THE

REV. JOSEPH KIDDER,

NOV. 3, 1813.

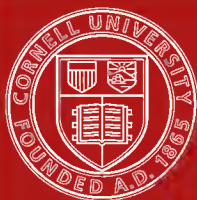


BY SAMUEL STEARNS, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN BEDFORD, MASS.



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S E R M O N.

1. TIMOTHY IV. 16.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine ; continue in them : for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

AN able and faithful ministry is one of the greatest blessings, ever conferred on the church of God. Aware of this, our Divine Redeemer, "when he ascended up on high, gave gifts unto men. To some, he gave apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Nor were the immediate successors of our Lord in the work of the ministry, under the guidance of his spirit, less mindful of the interests of the church in this regard. St. Paul particularly, especially by his Epistles to Timothy, has rendered the church a peculiar and imperishable service. He well knew the high importance of correct sentiments in order to right affections, and a holy practice. He also knew, that the purity and prosperity of the church depended, not a little under God, on the doctrines taught, and the example, which should be set before men, by their religious teachers. That ministers, therefore, should possess the requisite qualifications for this

sacred office, was a matter of the first importance. We find him accordingly in these Epistles directing his attention *particularly* to *them*, and in a very solemn and forcible manner enjoining on them, whatever is necessary for a faithful discharge of this highly responsible trust.

In the chapter of our text, the apostle informs Timothy, that in the latter times there would be a great defection from the truth. Many in the Christian church would apostatize from the faith of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, giving heed to false teachers, and embracing corrupt and pernicious sentiments. Against such teachers, and such sentiments he would have Timothy solemnly warn and guard the church. And that he might be properly qualified for this incumbent duty ; that he might know the truth, and preach with effect, the unadulterated word of life, in opposition to every false sentiment, the apostle exhorts him to study the holy scriptures ; to take heed to his *doctrine* and to *himself*. He would then meet the approbation of his Divine Master, and be likely to save from error and ruin, those who heard him. “ *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine ; continue in them : for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*”

These words are not to be limited to Timothy. They equally concern his successors in office, in all ages of the church. To *them*, as to *him*, the Holy Ghost saith, “ take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine.” In applying them, therefore, with reference to this solemn occasion, we shall be led to notice some of the requisite qualifications for the Christian Ministry, leading to that fidelity in the discharge of duty, which is acceptable to God, and has a hopeful prospect of success, in the salvation of men.

Pursuing the order of the text, we are led to remark,

1st. That *he* who would serve at the Altar, must take heed to *himself* ; that he possess the qualifications, which the nature of the office requires. These are *natural* and *acquired*.

A sound mind, cultivated and improved by a good education, ought ever to be considered an essential qualification for the christian ministry. “Not a novice,” said an inspired apostle, “lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Whatever may be pretended by the ignorant and self deluded, knowledge is an essential part of ministerial furniture ; and without it, no man is qualified for this arduous work. God forbid, that I should be understood to represent this as sufficient of itself ! But when sanctified by grace, it greatly conduces to the usefulness of a minister, and ought ever to be considered an appendage, essential to the office. This will materially aid him in supporting the dignity, and discharging the duties of his sacred ambassage. Indeed, no man can possess too extensive an acquaintance with human science for the ministry of reconciliation. Every new acquisition of knowledge will enlarge the mind, and extend the sphere of a minister’s usefulness. There is nothing in the vast range of human science, which may not be turned by him to some good account in performing the duties of holy vocation. Every acquirement of this nature may be useful for the illustration and establishment of truth, or the refutation of error. Accordingly under every dispensation of our religion, God has shewn his approbation of learning by calling some, who were eminent in knowledge, to the most conspicuous usefulness in the church. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was honored of JEHOVAH, as the leader and lawgiver of his people. By him the Almighty humbled the proud Pharaoh, and in holy triumph led Israel out of Egypt. Him also did the Holy Ghost employ, as the penman of a large and interesting portion of the inspired scriptures. Paul, whose labors in the church were more abundant, who as a minister of the cross was second to no one ever yet entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. His profound learning and commanding eloquence are conspicu-

ous in all his Epistles ; and by the grace of GOD enabled him to combat error and establish the truth, with wonderful success. As he carried the gospel into almost every part of the earth, preached and wrote more than any one of the apostles, we may fairly conclude that he has rendered the church the most extensive and eminent service. A minister of Christ, then, ought to be a man of competent abilities, and extensive knowledge.

A knowledge of the learned languages, particularly those in which the scriptures were originally written, will greatly assist him in discerning the precise import of many parts of the word, and bring to his view some attracting beauties, which are almost necessarily lost in a translation.

A general acquaintance with history, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, is of eminent use to the christian minister. It not only enlarges his mind in the knowledge of men and things, but brings him acquainted with various windings of the human heart, and enables him to adapt his addresses with a fairer prospect of success.

But a knowledge of the holy *Scriptures*, a deep and universal acquaintance with these living oracles, is of *pre-eminent* importance. To these, therefore, should the ambassador of GOD direct his particular attention, both before and after entering on the duties of the sanctuary. "Search the scriptures," is the command of JEHOVAH, solemnly binding on all his followers ; but especially so, on such, as would serve at the altar. They are entrusted with the care of immortal souls, and have need to be well instructed in the will of GOD, that they do not lead men into by-paths, to wander and perish forever. It is required that the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and that the people should seek the law at his mouth. But how shall he impart to others, that, which he never possessed ? If he know not the mind of the Lord, how shall he inform him, who would inquire ? A minister of Christ is set for the defence of the gospel ; but

how shall he execute that momentous trust, unless he be well versed in sacred theology, and able skilfully to wield the weapons by which this defence is to be made ? How else shall he silence the scoffing infidel, and drive from the field the enemies of the cross ? Reason proclaims, he must in some measure be master of those evidences, both internal and external, by which the religion of the gospel is proved to be of God. He will otherwise but betray the cause he is set to defend, and give the enemy occasion of triumph.

But the minister of Christ must not only be a man of ability and learning ; he must also be a man of *correct* and *exemplary life*. “ A bishop then,” saith an inspired apostle, “ must be blameless, sober, of good behavior, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient ; not a brawler, not covetous. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without ; lest he fall into the reproach, and snare of the devil.” The force of example is known to be of the most attractive and commanding influence. This speaks with an eloquence peculiar to itself. If then the example of a public teacher be at variance with his holy profession, and the doctrines he preaches to others, it must necessarily fix on him, not only a charge of the vilest hypocrisy, but destroy the efficacy of the word preached. The enemies of religion will triumph. The Redeemer’s cause will suffer. Sinners will be hardened and emboldened to continue in sin. And awful to think ! their blood will be required at the watchman’s hands. The nature of the office, the good of souls, and the prosperity of Zion, therefore, all require, that an ambassador of God be not only a man of inoffensive morals, but of conspicuous and attractive virtues. Aware of this, St. Paul commands Timothy to be “ an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and purity.”

The good minister of Jesus Christ has the glory of God and the happiness of men near at heart. These he considers,

as the grand object of his ministry, for the attainment of which, he is to account even life itself not dear to him. He feels his own weakness and need of divine help, and gives himself unto prayer, that the Father of lights would graciously enlighten his mind to perceive his truth, and impart to him that wisdom, which is from above.

Those who are entrusted with the care of souls, who are to instruct and lead others in the way of life, of all men, have need to be men of *prayer*. The arduous nature of their office, the numerous difficulties which are inseparable from a faithful discharge of duty, the darkness of their own minds, the danger of leading their people astray, all solemnly demand it. And if they have a proper sense of the vast importance of their office and a right discharge of it, that God may be glorified, and the salvation of their people secured, they cannot but be such.

Need I add, that the minister of Christ must take heed to his *own heart*? That this be under the governing influence of the religion, he is to preach to others, is too obvious, it would seem, to need the support of a single argument. Without this, it is easy to see, the best natural and acquired abilities are essentially deficient. Like a ship without rudder or ballast, they are exposed to every sea, and to every blast. By taking a wrong direction they are ever liable to corrupt the word of truth, and may prove the most serious injury to the cause, which they are called to defend. Besides, if the teacher be himself destitute of those holy affections, which are the root and substance of all moral goodness, how shall he profitably teach and instruct his fellow men? If he have no saving experience of the nature and power of grace in subduing sin and rectifying the heart, how shall he guide others in the way of truth and salvation? If the blind lead the blind, will not both stumble and fall together into error, and irretrievable ruin? Reason teaches, that he, who would guide others to the Lord Jesus, should be himself experienced in

every part of the way. Without such experience, we hesitate not to say, no man, however learned and otherwise great, is qualified to be a guide of souls, to plead the Redeemer's cause and transact the affairs of his gospel kingdom. In order to this, he must have felt the power of grace on his own heart. He will then be able to describe its nature and effects, and, acting under its influence, will spare no pains in persuading men to embrace it.

The man of experienced *piety*, other qualifications being equal, unquestionably, is much the most likely to answer the great end of the Christian ministry, in reconciling sinners to God. He knows something of the worth of souls, and the extreme danger they are in of being lost forever. And acting under the influence of that divine love, which breathes good will to men, he will think no exertions too great to bring them to Christ. This will arm him against temptations to a life of indolence. It will make him willing to be "instant in season and out of season." It will carry him often to the study, and to the throne of grace; to the houses of the prayerless and secure; to the chambers of the afflicted, the sick and the dying. He will then feel for every member of the flock, and will make their joys and sorrows in a sense his own. It will rouse into action all the latent energies of his soul, and improve them for his Master's glory and their salvation.

A rational and well directed *zeal* in so glorious a cause is not unworthy the ambassador of God. The nature of his office, the worth of souls, and his Master's honor, solemnly urge to it. It gives a consistency to his efforts in reconciling sinners to God, and sheds a lustre around the cause with which he is entrusted. Does he ask for an example? Let him turn his eyes upon the Apostle of the Gentiles. How ready to forego his own ease and worldly interests, to encounter the most formidable difficulties and dangers, to suffer, and even to die, that the gospel might be preached, and dying.

sinner saved? Let the minister of the cross imbibe this noble spirit; let him "go and do likewise."

These are qualifications of high importance for the christian ministry; and it deeply concerns every one who would be clothed with so sacred a trust, to take heed to *himself*, that he possess them. He must also in the

2d place, Take heed to his *doctrine*.

An essential and important branch of ministerial labor is preaching the Word. "Go ye into all the world," said the risen Jesus to his disciples, "and preach the gospel to every creature." And the apostle charges Timothy, "preach the word." Again he says, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." "For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." From these and other passages of holy writ we learn, that ministers are to *preach*, and *what* they are to preach. They are to preach, not themselves, the inventions of their own distempered minds, "but Christ Jesus the Lord;" the pure unadulterated doctrines of the Bible. With singular propriety, then, does the apostle command the teachers of religion to take heed to their *doctrine*.

The Bible is the exhaustless source from which they are to derive their religious instructions. This contains the will of God concerning our guilty world, and he explicitly requires that his ministers faithfully declare it to his people. From his mouth they are to take the word, and give the people warning from him. And while on the one hand, they are not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, on the other, they may "not shun to declare the whole counsel of God." The Holy Ghost saith, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good

works." Doubtless he knew what doctrines are for the edification of the church, and what are best adapted to convince and convert sinners to Christ. And if ministers keep back essential truth, under whatever pretence, they do it at their *peril*. They betray the cause, they are set to defend, and awful will be their account.

Equally deficient, perhaps, is that *mode* of handling gospel truth, which confounds, and leaves no distinct impressions on the minds of hearers. Though born in the midst of gospel light and with the holy scriptures in their hands, it is well known to those who as ministers are conversant with their fellow men, that for the most part, while unenlightened by the spirit of grace, their views of gospel truth and the way of salvation by Christ are at best extremely confused and deficient. What need therefore have they of having them often and distinctly unfolded to their view? How otherwise shall they see their wretchedness and remedy, and be persuaded to embrace it? "The whole need not the physician, but they who are sick." Sinners must first see themselves in a sickly perishing condition, before they will seek in earnest for help.

In his endeavors to bring them to this, the christian teacher will have occasion to unfold to their view the wretched consequences of the human apostacy. "By one man sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for that all have sinned." "They are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." All, then, by nature are involved together in one common state of moral ruin. Having lost the image of God, and derived from their degenerate parents a corrupt and sinful nature, they have none of the requisite qualifications for the kingdom of heaven. On the contrary, as violators of the holy and perfect law of God, they lie exposed to its tremendous curse, which dooms the guilty offender to undescribable and ceaseless ruin. In this deplorable state the gospel finds them, and kindly furnishes a glorious and all-sufficient remedy.

It presents to their view an infinite and eternal Saviour, who is the Son of GOD, and GOD the Son ; and therefore “able to save to the uttermost all who come to GOD by him.” Whatever was necessary to prepare the way for the forgiveness of sins through him, on terms of condescending grace, he has effected. Proclamation of this inestimable truth is made in the gospel. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him.” For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Faith then in the blessed Son of GOD is the gracious term on which salvation may be had by all who hear this joyful sound. This faith produces love to GOD, and good will to men ; breaks the sinful heart of stone, and excites deep and bitter repentance for sin ; moderates the sinners love of the world, and raises his affections to things above ; breaks the chain which bound him in the service of iniquity, and produces humble obedience to GOD. He is then born of GOD, and in Christ Jesus, by a justifying and saving faith. “Old things are passed away, behold all things become new.”

To effect this radical and glorious change in the sinner's heart and life is the peculiar office of the Divine Spirit ; and it is usually wrought through the medium, and by his blessing attending the means of grace. For this end, as a fruit of the Mediator's purchase, he is sent into this wretched and ruined world. And, as a source of unfailing comfort, his promise to believers is, “I will never leave you. Because I live, ye shall live also.” Such is the power, and such are the happy effects of gospel truth, when clearly unfolded, and in the hands of this Divine Agent. Can we wonder then, that the Holy Ghost saith to the minister of Christ, *take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine* ? Such attention, however, previous to entering on the public duties of his office, is not enough. He must, in the

3d place, *Persevere*, both in a correct personal deportment, and in preaching the unadulterated truth of God. "Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine ; *continue in them.*"

The propriety and vast importance of this branch of the exhortation forces itself on the reflecting mind at first view. The same considerations combine to urge the Christian minister to persevere in these duties, which demand his attention to them at first. The glory of God, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of men, are objects of the same undescrivable moment, "yesterday, to-day, and forever." For the attainment of these, he is vested with the sacred character ; and is to study and preach, and pray, and spend, and be spent. And can he need any further excitement to persevering fidelity than his Master's command ? In the concluding words of the text he has it. "For in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself*, and *them* that hear thee."

By taking suitable heed to himself, to his own heart and life, he acquires, through grace, the character of a good man ; and by a faithful persevering discharge of his sacred trust, he secures his Master's approbation. Nor shall he go unrewarded. The approving smiles of heaven await him. His own soul shall be redeemed from the power of death. A crown, a crown of glory, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, is reserved for him. And not only shall his own salvation be secure through grace, but he may humbly hope for the additional reward of seeing many of his dear flock gathered by his labors under the Redeemer's saving wing ; the joy of which, to the godly minister, is by such more sensibly felt, than can be described. How vastly important is it then, that the unmixed truth of God, and the whole truth, be clearly stated, and solemnly urged on the hearts and consciences of sinful dying men ? And what commanding motives are here presented to him with whom the dispensation of the gospel is entrusted, to persevering fidelity in this glorious work ? With considerations like these in view, well might an holy

apostle, in the face of every attending difficulty and danger, exclaim, "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Well might the host of holy martyrs, who sealed with their blood the precious doctrines of the cross, triumph over the faggot and the fire. And well may every minister of Christ, animated by such hopes as our text inspires, set his face as a flint against every opposing enemy, and in the strength of the Lord of hosts resolve, amid the most formidable discouragements, on a course of persevering fidelity. "To spend and be spent" in such a cause, how honorable, how glorious! Then may he who is thus honored, in the closing scene, adopt the triumph of St. Paul, and exclaim; "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."

Several inferences of particular concern to ministers and people are naturally suggested by this subject. But omitting these, some addresses common to the occasion will close.

My first respects are due to the aged and venerable Pastor of this church, who, for many years, has presided over them in the Lord.

We rejoice, respected Sir, that God has protracted your days and continued your labors in the ministry to so advanced an age. Much do we congratulate you on the prospects of this day. Having long had the charge of this people in the Lord, and continuing still the Pastor of this church, it is natural to suppose you feel a lively interest in their welfare, and a deep concern to see them provided with a good minister of Jesus Christ, before you leave the world. We rejoice that it has pleased the great Head of the church to direct and dispose their hearts to the choice of a man of so amiable a

temper, and so well qualified, as a colleague Pastor, to succeed you in this arduous work. We trust you will be to him a father, and that he will be to you a son. The LORD grant that you may be a rich blessing to each other, and to this church and people. May your life and usefulness, dear sir, be still protracted. May you still exhibit to the world, that *"with the ancient is wisdom ; and in length of days understanding."* May your *"days speak, and the multitude of your years teach wisdom."* May the comforts and consolations of the gospel you have so long ministered to others, be your support under all the trials of life and the burdens of age. And when your sun of life shall set, may it go down with a bright and animating prospect of another, and *endless day*. Then may you appear glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and your GOD be your strength and portion forever.

My affectionate notice is next due to the Pastor elect, who is now to be ordained over this flock of GOD.

My Dear Brother,

The interesting moment to which you have long been looking forward, I trust with a trembling praying heart, has arrived. You are now to be solemnly separated to the peculiar service of Christ, and vested with an office the most dignified and deeply responsible, which was ever conferred on mortal man. You are to be employed, not in the service of the kings and rulers of this world, not in composing the little discordant interests of states and empires, but in the service of the KING of kings, and in reconciling and preparing men for the imperishable honors of that kingdom, which is spiritual and eternal. From *him* your commission is to derive ; and to him you are to be accountable for every measure you pursue, and every word you utter relating to it. On the manner in which you execute this momentous trust, great things are depending. If faithful to your Master, his glory will be secured, and there is a hopeful prospect that his re-

volted subjects will be reconciled to him and saved forever. If you neglect his interest and trifle with his message, the concerns of his kingdom will suffer. Sinners will be encouraged and confirmed in their rebellion, and the most tremendous consequences will follow. Such, dear sir, and so deeply responsible is the office with which you are now to be clothed. Well then may you tremblingly exclaim, *who is sufficient for these things!*

But, my brother, you will remember, that you are not called to encounter these formidable difficulties in your own strength. He who calls you to this service is Lord of all; and therefore able to support you in it. And for your encouragement, has he not said, "fear not; lo I am with you alway, even unto the end." If faithful to your trust, "though Israel be not gathered, you will be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and GOD will be your strength." The salvation of your own soul will be secured, and a crown of glory conferred on you.

Your Master's glory, your own happiness, and the salvation of this people, then, who are now to be committed to your special care, all urge you to *take heed to yourself, and to your doctrine*; that you may acquit yourself acceptably in this holy and benevolent service. What a glorious assemblage of the most noble and animating motives? Who would not willingly spend and be spent for the attainment of such sublime and imperishable objects? Go ye forth then, my brother, in the strength of the LORD of hosts, leaning by faith on his almighty arm, supported and encouraged by the promise of his presence, and enter cheerfully the field of ministerial labor. Here you will find no place for indolence or worldly ease, but enough to be done to employ all your time and all your talents. Your Master's kingdom is if possible to be built up, and the salvation of this people secured. The people of GOD are to be instructed, comforted and pressed forward in their way to heaven. Sinners are to be made

acquainted with their wretched condition, as involved in sin and moral ruin, exposed to the curse of God's righteous law, and sure to perish, unless they be *born again*, and spiritually united to Christ.

These, my brother, are weighty concerns, solemn and pressing, as *eternity*. From an intimate acquaintance with you, I am persuaded it will be your persevering endeavor to be found faithful; and as a servant of the most high God to shew unto this people the way of salvation. Consequently on the one hand, you will avoid abstruse and unintelligible speculations, which were never calculated to inform the minds or mend the hearts of the hearers. On the other hand, you will I trust guard against that loose declamatory style of preaching, which leaves little or no distinct impression of the vast importance of divine things on the minds of men, and therefore does but trifle with their salvation. But you, dear Sir, have not so learned Christ. You will endeavor to feed the flock of God with the sincere milk of the *word*. For what is the chaff to the wheat? Take heed then to yourself, and to your doctrine; that you may *both save yourself, and those who hear you*.

We wish you a long and successful ministry. In love and peace may your life and ministry be spent among this people. And when called to give up your stewardship may you meet the welcome, and receive the reward of the wise, and of those, who turn many to righteousness, who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.

Brethren and friends of this Church and Congregation.

God is showing you this day that he is not unmindful of his church and cause. The interests of Zion lie near his heart, and he will never forsake her. The gates of hell may threaten and things look dark for a season, but they shall not prevail. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy com-

eth in the morning. After having been long destitute of the stated ministry of the word, you have now the pleasing prospect of enjoying, as in time past, this inestimable blessing. Much do we rejoice with you on this auspicious occasion, and mingle with your's our fervent ascriptions of praise to God and the Lamb. Your recent laudable exertions in erecting and consecrating to the service of religion *this sacred edifice*; followed by a zeal, worthy of so good a cause, in resettling the gospel ministry among you, notwithstanding the present afflicted and embarrassing state of our country, we cannot but view as hopeful indications, that the Lord is *indeed* with you.

God in his providence is sending you a man to take the charge of this flock, who, to some of us, is well known; and who, we confidently trust, will prove a rich blessing to you and your dear children. Brethren, behold the man! the man of God, the man of your prayers, and of your choice! He comes to you at your call, in the name of the Lord of hosts, to take the charge, not of your little worldly interests; but of your precious and immortal souls. The covenant, which is now to be entered into between you and him, is of the most responsible and endearing nature. The charge he is to receive is solemn and weighty, as *eternity*. You will remember, he is to watch for your *souls*, as one who must render an account; and *cursed be the man who doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully*. Awful will be the consequences, if he shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God. It will be at his *peril*, and most dangerous to his hearers, if he handle the *word* of God deceitfully, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. If his heart be right with God, he dare not do it. Let him then freely speak to you the Lord's message, and "take heed how you hear." Remember, the word he imparts will be to you a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Grant him a patient and candid hearing, and with a praying heart search the scriptures daily, that you may know the truth and importance of what he delivers.

Whatever is agreeable to the unerring *word* be sure to receive, and count him not your enemy because he tells you the truth.

His labors will be *numerous*, and *pressing*. My brethren, expect not too much of him, especially in the early part of his ministry, and in a way of visiting from house to house. The study must necessarily engross a large portion of his time, that he may bring beaten oil into the sanctuary. Break not his heart by a cold neglect of his ministry ; but encourage and strengthen his hands by an exemplary attendance on the word and ordinances. Support him by your influence and liberality ; and give him no occasion to complain, that he spends his strength for naught and in vain. In a special manner, forget him not in your daily addresses to the throne of grace ; and see that you receive not the grace of God in vain. So may you and your Pastor be built up together in holy love, adorned with every christian grace, and be the crown of each other's joy, when this world shall be no more.

My venerable Fathers and respected Brethren in the ministry.

How great is the work to which GOD in his providence hath called us, and how solemn our responsibility ! The Lord of hosts hath called us into his service, and sent us with important messages to men. Have we delivered them with that fidelity, which his honor and their salvation demand ? Why then are not our people more generally reconciled to him, and devoted to his service ? Is it because the word preached is not mixed with faith in them who hear it ? or is it because we have handled the word of God deceitfully ? Have we labored in our studies with that persevering diligence, which our Master's business and the good of souls require ? From the labors of the study and the devotions of the closet, have we proceeded to the pulpit in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, regardless of every other consideration than his glory, and the salvation of our hearers ?

Men are usually not inactive in pursuing the little momentary concerns of this dying life. We see them encountering the most formidable difficulties, and pressing forward in the very face of danger, with an unconquerable resolution, in pursuit of the mere bubble of worldly honor or riches. And shall we be indolent or indifferent in a cause, which has the glory of the eternal God and the salvation of our perishing fellow men for its object, and in which all heaven has been engaged for more than five thousand years? No, my brethren, God forbid that we should thus trifle and betray the cause with which we are so sacredly entrusted! Let us rather, warmed with the love of souls, and confiding in Almighty grace, gird on the armour of light and become encreasingly valiant, as difficulties multiply, for the Lord of hosts, and the salvation of dying men. Then shall we appear in character as the ambassadors of heaven, and *though Israel be not gathered, yet shall we be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and God shall be our strength.*

This large and respected assembly will indulge me a word in the close.

Fellow travellers to the grave, and to the world of spirits. How great is the love of God to sinful dying men! The LORD looked down from heaven and beheld the race of man involved in sin and ruin. No human eye was found to pity; no created arm could impart relief. The time was a time of need, and a season of love. The bowels of JEHOVAH yearned for the creature's misery, and his own arm brought salvation. He gave his own and only Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and sent him into this wretched world to shew us the way of salvation. By his own obedience and blood, the Son of God hath honored the law, which we have broken, and opened to us a new and living way of access to his Father's love. Every obstacle to your salvation is re-

moved, except what exists in your own breasts, and the voice of eternal love is crying after you, Come ; for all things are now ready ; come, that you may receive the remission of your sins, and live forever. This is the message with which Christ's ministers are charged. This we now declare to you in the presence of heaven and earth, and as his ambassadors beseech you, in Christ's stead, to receive it, and be reconciled to GOD. If, dear sirs, you accept this message and comply with our Master's request, you are *made* forever. GOD is your friend, and heaven with all its weight of glory your portion. If you spurn the benevolent offer, and continue to reject the Savior's grace, all is *lost*, and you will perish without hope. We tremble at the thought, and in the name of GOD renew the offer of pardon and eternal life. Will ye then, O ye perishing immortals, throw down the weapons of your rebellion at the foot of the Redeemer's cross, and be reconciled to GOD ! Or will you, in the very face of such melting love and such perishing need, resolve still to continue the unequal warfare, and rush madly on to certain and eternal ruin ! As ambassadors for Christ, we wait to know the issue of our Master's message. We wait to know if you will receive his grace and give yourselves away to him. O blessed day, and blessed occasion, if this may be the case with but one perishing sinner in this great assembly ! Some attending angel shall stretch his wings and bear the joyful news speedily to heaven. All the angels of GOD shall rejoice and be glad ; for lo ! yonder sinner *was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found !* And the vast assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect will join in the rapturous acclamation, and cry, *Amen ; Alleluia.* PRAISE YE THE LORD.

THE CHARGE,

BY

THE REV. MR. BULLARD,
OF PEPPERELL.

DEAR SIR,

BEING now consecrated to the work of the gospel ministry, by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, it is incumbent upon me, by the voice of this venerable council, to remind you of the high responsibility of the sacred office, with which you are invested ; and to charge you to take heed to *yourself*, to your *doctrine*, and to the *flock*, over which, in conjunction with our aged and beloved brother,* the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer.

When you consider the difficulty and importance of the station in which you are placed ; when you meditate upon the *account*, which you must hereafter give, as one set for the defence of the *gospel*, and to *watch* for *souls* ; well may you exclaim with Paul, “who is sufficient for these things ?” But be not dismayed. If your heart is in the work before you, as we hope and trust it is, our Divine Master, without whom we can do nothing, will not leave nor forsake you. His gracious promise to his apostles, “Lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” is applicable for the support and encouragement of every upright and faithful minister in his house, from generation to generation.

Go on in the strength of the LORD, watching and praying, daily, that you may not be found among those, who will be constrained, severally to say in the *decisive* hour, “They

* REV. JOSEPH KIDDER.

made me keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard I have not kept."

Keep thine heart with all diligence, and live circumspectly, redeeming the time. "Be thou an example unto believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Strive to commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD. "Be wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove."

That you may be a scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, sit down at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. Receive the *word* at His mouth, and preach *His* gospel to every creature. "Study to shew thyself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Knowing the terrors of the LORD, labor to persuade men to turn them from the error of their ways to the wisdom of the just. After the example of Christ, fervently call sinners to repentance, intreating and beseeching them in His stead to be reconciled unto GOD. While you thus strive to be an instrument in the hand of the Divine Spirit of making ready a people prepared for the LORD ; you will speak words of comfort to the household of faith, and feed the sheep and feed the lambs of Christ's flock, with food convenient for them.

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." As a steward in the house of GOD, you will bear it on mind that while *meat* is for men, *milk* is for babes.

Shun not to declare all the counsel of GOD, as far as your understanding *is*, or *shall* be opened to understand the scriptures. Keep nothing back which is profitable for your hearers, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus hath commanded us.

Preach the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and by sound speech, which cannot be condemned, labor to promote the kingdom founded in his atoning blood, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Cease not to

teach and to preach Jesus Christ, in the temple, and from house to house. "Be instant in season, out of season;" whether it be seasonable to thyself or not; "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrines."

Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints by our LORD and his apostles; but in doing this, keep in mind these words of Paul the aged, to the church at Corinth, "Not that we have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy."

In the discipline of the church, take the word of Christ for your guide; and let wisdom and prudence, meekness and love, tenderness and impartiality, mark all your steps. "Take heed lest in rooting up the tares you root up the wheat also." In dealing with offenders, exercise the feelings of benevolence, and, by the law of kindness on your tongue, shew that you act with a view to the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and to *their* spiritual and everlasting good. In every sermon, and in every act of discipline, remember this injunction of Peter upon the elders of the churches, and the gracious promise with which he enforces it upon them. "Feed the flock of GOD, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: Neither as being lords over GOD's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away."

In the administration of the special ordinances of the gospel, baptism and the LORD's supper, confine yourself to such as have a visible right to these seals of the covenant of grace; making a distinction between the holy and profane, the precious and the vile.

Should you, in the course of providence, be called to assist in setting apart others to the work of the evangelical ministry; lay your hand *suddenly* on no man; but duly attend to the *character*, to the *creed*, and to the *ability* of the candidate

presented before you for ordination. Endeavor to keep thyself pure in this matter, by committing the treasure of the gospel to faithful men *only*, who have so learned Christ, as to be able to teach others the way of salvation by Him.

At the close of the religious services of the sanctuary, you will remind the people that, "all are blessed of God, who hear his word and keep it;" and fervently bless them in the name of the LORD.

To excite you, dear sir, to keep this charge, and in all things to fulfil the ministry, which you have received of the Lord Jesus, testifying the gospel of the grace of God, with plainness and fidelity; daily recollect that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," and that Christ saith to each of His ministring servants, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." AMEN.

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE

REV. MR. HEYWOOD,

OF

DUNSTABLE, (Ms.)

BLESSED be God, that when men had forfeited his favor by sin, he was pleased to devise a way for their restoration unto him through the mediation and atonement of his coequal, coessential, and coeternal Son; that he also was pleased to provide the means for gathering into his spiritual kingdom, here on earth, such as will be eventually saved by him. The principal of which means are, the institution of his holy Sabbath, the revelation of his will in his word, the gospel ministry, and the gift of his Holy Spirit.

The Sabbath, the Spirit, and the Word, since the completing of the scriptures, are continually the same ; but the ministry of the word is shifted from hand to hand, as different persons in the different ages and generations of men, are inducted into the important office. Probably because there must be frequent changes of persons in this office, God has appointed a particular mode of induction, and exercised a special providence in regard to the qualifications, of the ambassadors for Christ, and put it into the minds of those who will be pastors after his own heart, to seek the requisite qualifications, and given them an earnest desire to be employed in the good work. He also exercises the same providence in regard to the satisfaction of those, who have been prior to them in the office, that they are qualified for it, that they are called, and accepted of God in it.

This venerable Council, in whom is invested the right and power of ordination and induction into the sacred office of the gospel ministry, having found it to be their duty to separate *you, sir*, to the solemn and important work, by prayer, and the laying of their hands upon *your head*, in manner as taught by examples in scripture and in the usages of the churches of Christ ; and having appointed unto me this part, I do now in their name and behalf, *dear brother*, give you this right hand as a token of our satisfaction, that you are called of God to the office and work of the gospel ministry. And we do heartily welcome you into our society as a fellow laborer with us in the vineyard of Christ, and as having the same powers, rights and privileges with us, in all things pertaining to the sacred office.

This brotherhood will we maintain with you, and this cordial friendship will we exercise towards you so long as you regard the solemn obligations, which you are now laid under, and faithfully perform the duties, and maintain the character of a minister of Christ, and we expect the same will be maintained, and exercised on your part towards us.

May you have wisdom given you from above to guide you into all truth, that you may be enabled to perform every part of ministerial duty with fidelity to Christ, who has now placed you as a laborer in this part of his vineyard. May you be a scribe well instructed, and able to give every one a portion in due season. May you watch for souls as one, who expects to give an account. May you seek the good of this Church and People, and cultivate peace among them, over whom the Holy Ghost has made you an overseer, and walk before them in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless.

May you have grace sufficient to carry you creditably through all the scenes, which are before you, whether prosperous or adverse.

May you live long and see the work of GOD prospering in your hands, winning many of every age and class of people to Christ ; and when you have done your services here, and shall be gathered to the people of GOD, may you have many souls as the seals of your ministry, and as your crown of rejoicing in the day of the LORD JESUS.

Brethren of the Church, beloved in the Lord,

We would join our hearts with yours in blessing and praising GOD for his merciful kindnesses towards you, in preserving you through so long a partially destitute state ; in not suffering your name to be blotted out from among the churches of Christ by the adverse scenes which you have passed through ; that he has preserved the life of his *aged servant, your senior pastor*, by whose instrumentality, you have had, at times, the preached word, and the gospel ordinances administered to you ; that you have had him here with you, notwithstanding his partial separation ; that no trials have lessened his affection for you ; but that he has been disposed to visit you in time of sickness ; and, when under bereavements, to pray with and for you, and to administer comforts to you, by his own sympathy, and from the

word of God; that you still live with him, and have the appearance of spiritual life among you.

We congratulate you much on the late increased sense of the importance of divine institutions, that you, with other inhabitants of the town, have been succeeded in your endeavors to erect an house of worship, whose foundation and building thereon are much larger than those of the first; and whose finishings and adornments bespeak a regard for Him, to whose worship it has been dedicated.

We also congratulate you on the degree of union, with which you have been favored in your settlement of another gospel minister in communion with *your senior pastor*. We trust you were directed by divine wisdom in your choice; and that he, who is now set over you, is set over you in the Lord, and that he will prove to be a pastor after God's own heart.

May you ever conduct with kindness, and christian benevolence towards him, strengthening his hands, and encouraging his heart in the great and arduous work, in which he is engaged.

May you always remember, that he is a partaker of human frailty, and be not hasty in blaming and censuring him for trifling faults; but seek to cover his faults, as far as is consistent, with the mantle of christian charity.

May you attend diligently and carefully on his teachings seeking to profit by them; be edified, built up, and established in the faith of Christ, your divine Savior; be increased in numbers and in graces, and under his wise and pious administrations, be continued a spiritual house, an holy habitation of God. And may you and your children long enjoy the blessings of God in, and with your Pastor, and be prepared to partake with him of the rewards, which are promised to the faithful in eternal glory. AMEN.

